Vagabond

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

vol. 8

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Hyuu

TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

I HAVE BECOME TOO ACCUSTOMED TO MY WOODEN PRACTICE SPEAR.

HUF

HUF

HUF

AM I TOO OVERWHELMED BY THIS DEADLY WEAPON...

...THE HŌZŌIN CROSS-SHAPED SPEAR?

OR PERHAPS...

HUF
HUF
HUF
DEEP BREATHS
HYUU
...I FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THIS MAN'S GREAT PRESENCE?

Musashi

#69

Life III

vol. 8

Story & Art by Takehiko Inoue

Based on the novel "Musashi" by Eiji Yoshikawa

FWUSH

FWOOSH

...

GASP!

THE SAX

WH...

I MISSED MY CHANCE!

DAMN!

HIS WOODEN SWORD IS TOO LONG.

IT THREW MUSASHI OFF.

LUCKY FOR HIM.

INSHUN, YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF OPEN!

...INSHUN WOULD BE DEAD.

HAD IT BEEN AN ACTUAL SWORD...

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

KRACK

INSHUN HAS NEVER LOST HIS CALM DURING A FIGHT, BUT NOW HE'S...

WHAT IS HAPPENING!?

...DURING THAT LONG FACE OFF?

KRICH

SHUF

SHUF

COULD MUSASHI REALLY HAVE GAINED THE UPPER HAND...

HUF

KLNCH

HUF

HUF

KLNCH

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

INSHUN...

HUF

HUF

THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS...

HUF

...WHAT YOU'VE BEEN AFTER-- MORTAL COMBAT...

!!!!

FWOSH.

GRP

BMP

!!

KRACK!

!!

WOOSH

GRP

YAH!!

FWOOM

SHUF

BUT NOW
I CAN *SEE.*

I CAN BARELY FEND HIM OFF.

HUF

HUF

HUF

I CAN SEE!!!

WHAT DID YOU TEACH MUSASHI!?

SIR!!

HE'S FINALLY HERE.

I'VE GROWN FAR TOO OLD TO ILLUMINATE INSHUN.

I *KNEW* SOMEONE ELSE WOULD COME.

AND THEN MUSASHI APPEARED BEFORE US.

COME...

SNAP

COME...

I CAN SEE THROUGH YOU, INSHUN.

A BATTLE OF LIFE AND DEATH...

THIS TIME YOUR LIFE'S ON THE LINE.

#70
Life III

FSSHH

FSSHH

FSSHH

FSSHH

FSSHH

I
HAVE THE
VISION.

I CAN SEE.

HUF

HUF

HUF

THMP

THMP

WHAT'S WRONG?

DAMN.

I'M NOT MYSELF.

ZZT

!?

NOT SO TALKATIVE.

HUF

HUF

YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM LAST TIME.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

HUF

HUF

WAIT...

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

I'M PUTTING MY LIFE ON THE LINE. EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT.

HUF

OF COURSE I'M NOT MY USUAL SELF.

HUF

HUF

ZZT

ZT

!?

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

I CAN SEE THROUGH YOU!!

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

I'VE WANTED THIS FOR SO LONG.

HUF

MORTAL COMBAT-- I'VE BEEN SEEKING IT OUT.

THIS IS IT...

HUF

HUF

I NEED THIS TO BECOME INVINCIBLE.

ZAKK

WHAT'S THAT?

HUF

HUF

HUF

OLD MAN, I CAN SEE THROUGH INSHUN!

HUF

HUF

...BUT MUSASHI HAS BECOME INCREDIBLY STRONG.

HUF

HUF

HUF

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MASTER TAUGHT HIM...

HE IS THE OPPONENT I'VE BEEN SEEKING OUT.

HUF

HUF

HUF

FINALLY

I CAN MOVE FREELY.

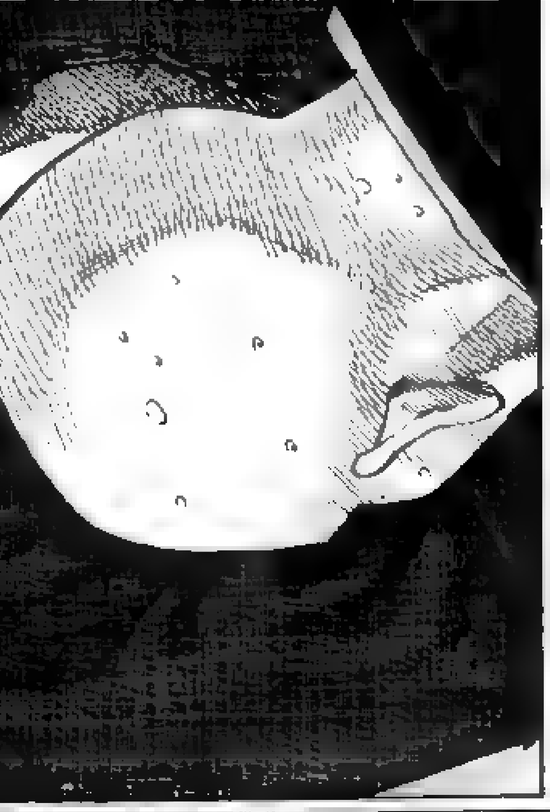
AH

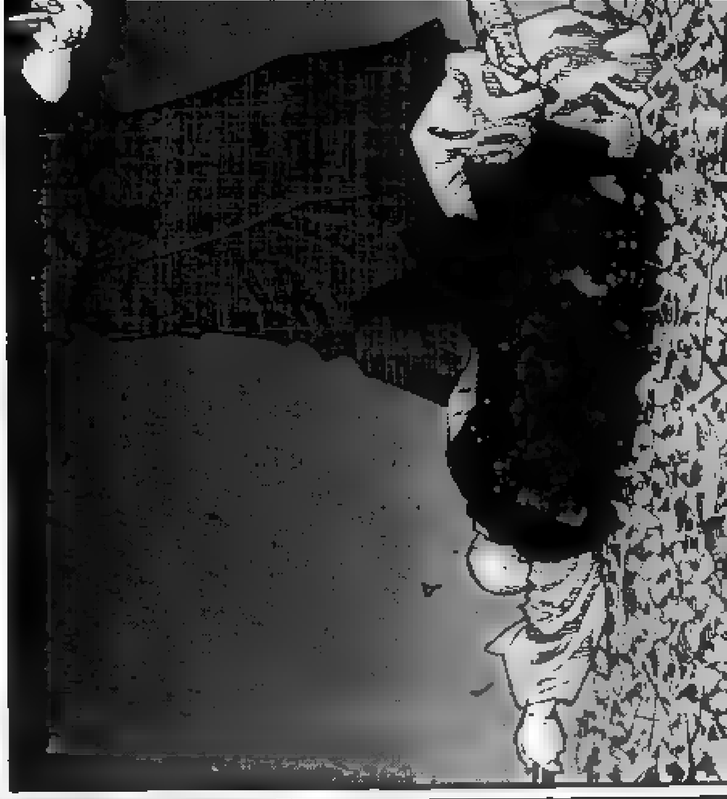
FWICH

SLISH

KKLD

FWAK





HUF
HUF

HUF

HUF
HUF

HUF
HUF

I AM STRONG!!

THWAK

THWAK

YAHH!!

SHUF

SHUF

HAH!!

HAH!!

YAHH!!

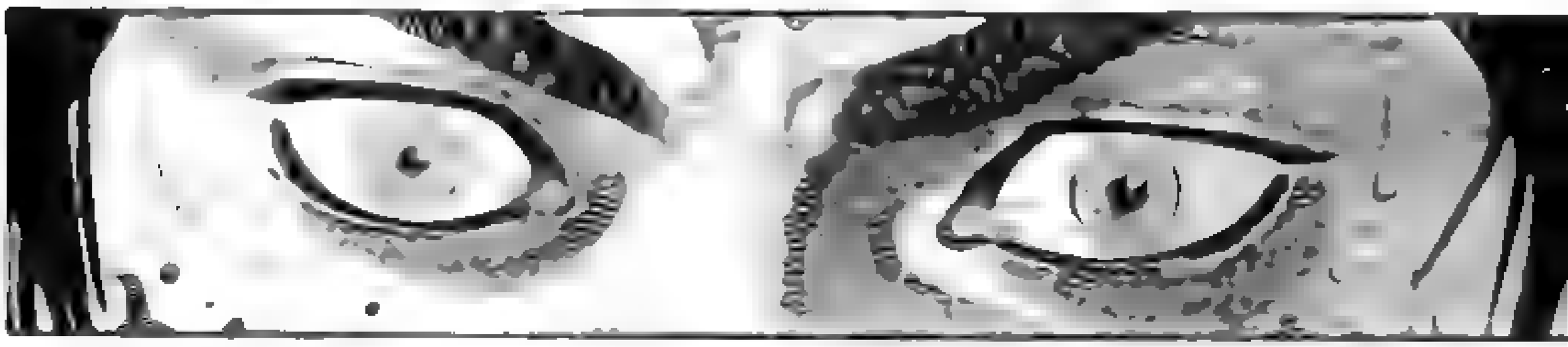
YAHH!!

HUF

HUF

HUF

I AM STRONG!!



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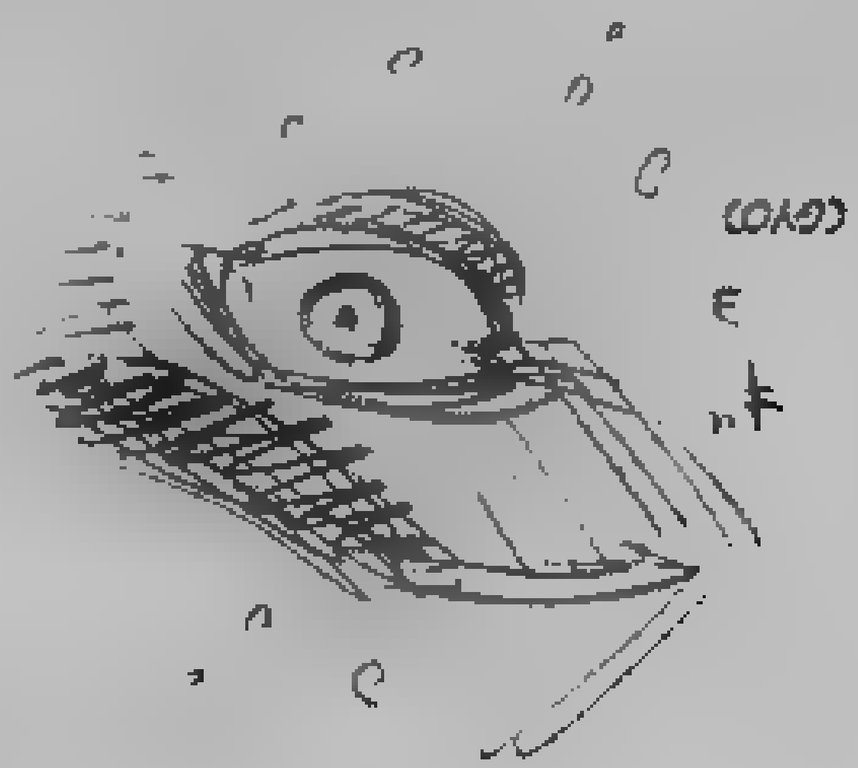
Vagabond



HUF!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

INSHUN!!

HM...

...!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

HUF!!

#71 Inshun

HE'S FAR BEYOND THE REST OF US.

HE'S A GENIUS.

INSHUN...

!?

IT'S NOT HIS VOICE.

ARE THEY HIS MEMORIES?

ARE THESE AGON'S... THOUGHTS?

WE ADMIRED YOUR STRENGTH...

...WE ALL WANTED TO BEFRIEND YOU.

ALL OF US...

THESE VISIONS KEEP COMING...

.....

THAT WAS WHY YOU WERE SO POPULAR WITH EVERYONE...

...AT FIRST.

...?

WHAT IS HE SAYING ...?

THOK

NNGH...

URGH...

I CONCEDE...

ARGH!!

I CONCEDE DEFEAT!!

INSHUN ...?

FWUP

SHUF

!?

SHUF

FSH

I YIELD!!

INSHUN!!

MOOSH

AAHH!!!

DON'T KILL ME.

Flip

MORTAL COMBAT.

TRY PUTTING YOUR LIFE ON THE LINE SOMETIME...

.....

!!

FWUMP

HUF

HUF

HUF

WHAT...?

YOU WERE UNAPPROACHABLE...

PEOPLE STOPPED TRYING TO BE YOUR FRIEND.

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

YOU HAD THE DESIRE TO BECOME STRONGER BUT DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER EMOTIONS?

.....

I SEE...

ADMIRATION

...

YOU BECAME THE HEIR OF HOZOIN

...

YOU BECAME INCREASINGLY STRONGER...

...TURNED INTO FEAR.

...BUT YOU ALSO BECAME INCREASINGLY MORE ISOLATED...

GASP!

THAT'S ME!!

HUF
HUF
HUF

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK OF THIS...

BUT I...

...I STILL ADMIRE YOUR STRENGTH, EVEN NOW...

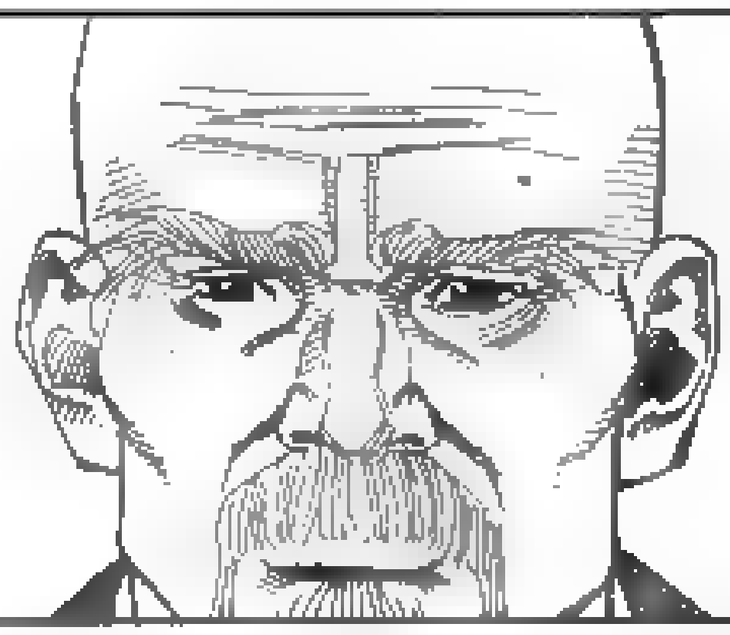
I'M STILL TRYING TO GET CLOSER TO YOUR GREATNESS ...

.....

HEY...

BUT I STILL CONSIDER YOU MY FRIEND.

SHUT
SHUT



HAH!!

HAH!!

YAH!!

INSHUN...

THAT'S MY NAME?

I USED A CHARACTER FROM *MY* NAME.

"INSHUN."

INSHUN...

IT'S A NICE NAME, EH?

YES...

AS OF TODAY, YOU'LL BE KNOWN AS INSHIN!!

WHAT ABOUT BEFORE?

WHAT WAS MY NAME BEFORE THAT?

I WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MY LIFE BEFORE I CAME HERE.

I CAN'T REMEMBER A THING.

WHAT WAS I LIKE BEFORE I BECAME INSHUN?

WHENEVER I TRY TO REMEMBER ...

...MY BODY STARTS TO TINGLE...

...AND EVERYTHING BLACKS OUT...

...BEFORE I BECAME INSHUN...

.....

SHINNOSUKE!!

COULD THIS BE...

...MASTER IN'EI'S MEMORIES?

OR_

YAHH!

KLAKK

YAHH!

YAHH!

YAHH!

KLAK

THOK

UNGH!

WHAT WAS THAT!?

UROH ...

HM HM

MITSUDA ...

CAN'T SWING A SPEAR AS IF IT WERE A SWORD.

HA HA

YOU'RE LUCKY MASTER IN'EI IS WILLING TO BE YOUR OPPONENT.

HMPH!

DAMN. I MAY BE A BEGINNER IN SPEAR FIGHTING BUT IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS DIFFICULT...

UROH!

HRMPH!

HAD ENOUGH?

#72 Shinnosuke

...THESE MEMORIES ARE MINE!!

KLAK

THUMP

KLAK

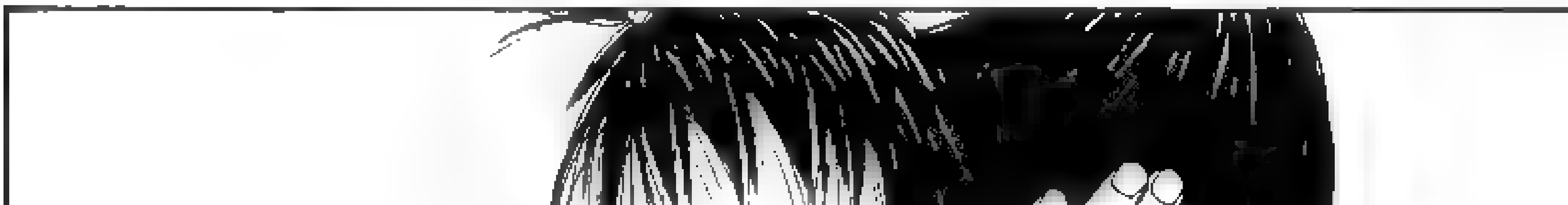
YAHHH!!!

TSUZAK

HM? YOU STILL WANT TO CONTINUE?

OF COURSE!!

OR PERHAPS...



HUF
HUF
HUF
FOOM
!!

WHAT'S WRONG, SHINNOSUKE?
DON'T YOU LIKE SPEAR FIGHTING?

AS A MAN BORN INTO THE MITSUDA FAMILY...

...YOU, TOO, WILL EVENTUALLY LEARN THE MARTIAL ARTS...

YOU MUST PROTECT THE CLAN.

HRMPH!

KRICH

NNGH...

SHIN...

HMMF!

HM?

SHINNOSUKE...

TRY THIS.

...IT'S OBVIOUS HE'LL BE RECKLESS AND STUBBORN.

AS A SON OF YOURS...

FIP

.....

HE SHOWS GOOD FORM!

...!!

ONE MORE MATCH, MASTER IN'EI!!

HRMPH!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT.

URK

WHAT!?

HE'LL BEAT HIS FATHER IN NO TIME, YES HE WILL.

SHINNOSUKE, GO AHEAD AND JOIN YOUR MOTHER!!

ONE MORE MATCH!!

FWOM
FWOM

AN ERRANT SAMURAI IN TRAINING, I SUPPOSE...
BUT HE LOOKS SUSPICIOUS.
HMPH !
...
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE NOT FROM THIS AREA...
EXCUSE ME...
...
UH...
...NOTHING...
GLARE
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?

I AM SORRY, BUT I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY FOOD YOU COULD SPARE FOR ME...
I'M ASHAMED TO SAY I HAVEN'T EATEN ANYTHING... FOR THREE DAYS.

MU...

...FOR THREE DAYS...!?

THIS MAN...

...MAKES ME FEEL UNCOM-FORTABLE.

HUF

HUF

SHINNOSUKE!

MNCH

MNCH

MNCH

LET'S GO HOME.

HMM

.....

.....

...!!

HE'S FOLLOWING US...

HE'S FOLLOWING US!

KRICH

SHUFF

SHUFF

FWISH

!!

RUN, SHINNOSUKE !!

MOTHER...

!!

GASP!!

FWIS

!

...YOU MUST PROTECT THE CLAN.

AS A MAN BORN INTO THE MITSUDA FAMILY...

HMPH!

SLAM UP

YOUR MOTHER'S A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

KRICK

FWOOSH

UMF!

GOMP

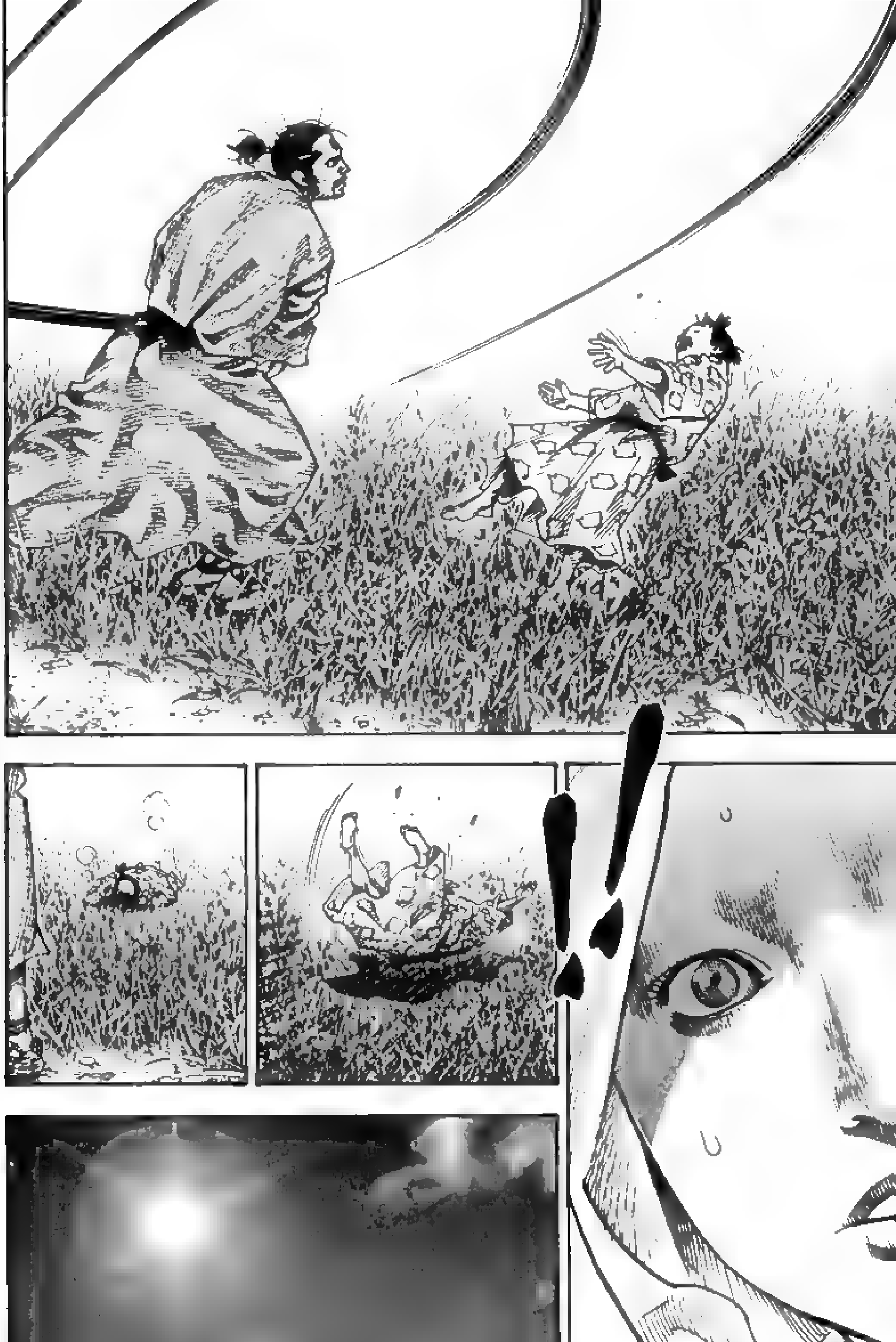
DAMN BRAT!!

KRICH

KRICH

FUP

SHINNO-SUKE



HIIF

DON'T STRIIGGLE

HIIF

I WON'T TAKE YOUR LIFE!!

HIIF

HIIF

SHINNOSUKE...

ZINGG

ZINGG

SHINNOSUKE!!

SHI

KA

TSUNK

ARGH!

MOTHER...

Vagabond

YOU BASTARD!

HOW COULD YOU BEAT A MAN AFTER YOU'VE ALREADY KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS !?

LOOK AT HIM!

I WON!

I WON !!

!!

#73 | Playing in the Sand

MOTHER...

SAYA--!!

SHINNOSUKE
!!

FATHER...!!!

!!

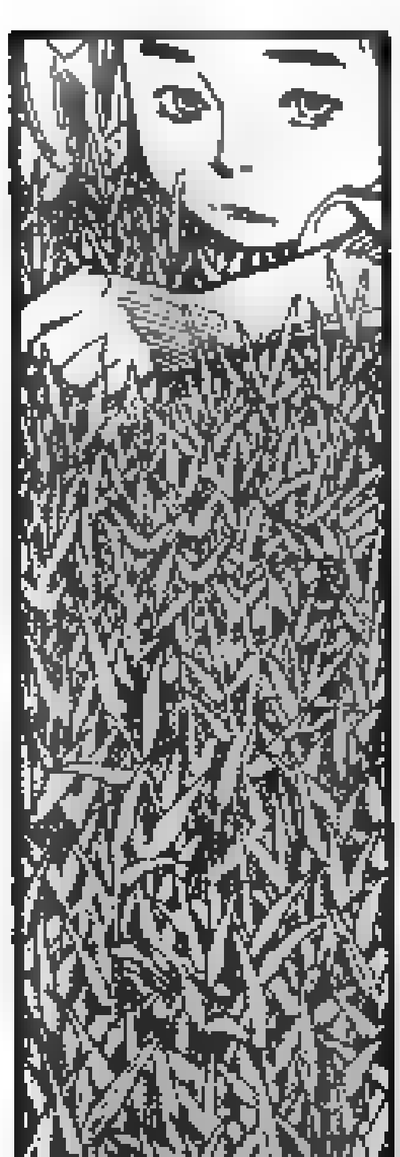
WHO
THE HELL
ARE YOU!?

FWISH

THE HUSBAND NEXT?

FWSSS

SHWAK



FWUMP

SPLORT

SAYA...

...SHIN...

WUUD

...SHINNOSUKE...

MY DELICIOUS PICKLES—

YOUR FATHER FORGOT TO TAKE THE PICKLES I GAVE HIM

HEY RHINOSUKE

!!
FWOM
BRR
BRR
BRR

SHINNOSUKE
...!!

...TO BE STRONG?

WHAT IS IT...

T-HWAK

YAHH!

INSHUN...

...THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HOZOIN!!

WHAT IS...

...STRENGTH ?

MUSASHI...

...FLOATING UPWARDS...

SOME-THING DARK RED...

WHAT IS THIS...?

I WANT TO RISK MY LIFE IN BATTLE.

I WANT TO PEEK AT THE BRINK OF DEATH.

MORTAL COMBAT.

MORTAL COMBAT...

I WANTED TO BECOME STRONG.

I THOUGHT I WAS STRIVING TO BECOME STRONGER...

...BUT I WAS ONLY COVERING THINGS UP WITH SAND...

...MY GUILT...

...MY WEAKNESS ...

I WANTED TO BECOME INVINCIBLE SO THAT I COULD COVER THEM UP AND BURY THEM...

I'VE NEVER EVEN STEPPED ONE FOOT AWAY FROM THIS PLACE...

I COVERED MYSELF UP...

WITH NOTHING TO OFFER ANYONE.

I
WAS
ALL
ALONE...

WITHDRAWN
INTO
MYSELF...

...WHERE
NO ONE
COULD
REACH
ME.

I WANT TO LIVE.

Vagabond

...ALONE FOREVER...?

THAT'S MY BODY...

WAIT!

WAIT...

AM I TO REMAIN...

#74 Sudden Storm

PLISH

HM!?

MUSASHI!

YOUR SWORDS-MANSHIP IS AWFUL.

IT'S PRACTICALLY A JOKE.

...!?

WHAT--!?

IS THAT YOU, INSHUN!?

PUSH

AND YET YOU MANAGED TO PUSH ME...

IN A MATTER OF YEARS YOU'LL BECOME AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER.

PUSH

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN.

PUSH

I WANT
TO LIVE

FSSSSH

FUCK

FUCK

DO YOU HATE ME FOR WHAT I'VE DONE?

OLD MAN...

YES...?

FSSH

HH

I BET YOU DIDN'T THINK INSHUN WOULD DIE.

YOU TRAINED ME.

BUT...

...HE WOULD HAVE KILLED *ME.*

...IF *I* HADN'T KILLED *HIM...*

...TO EXPERIENCE MORTAL COMBAT...

I KNEW THIS MIGHT HAPPEN...

THIS IS WHAT INSHUN WANTED...

I WASN'T ME...

...I DID NOT ENCOURAGE HIM TO LEARN THE SPEAR

IF ANYTHING, I DISCOURAGED HIM.

HE PICKED UP A SPEAR ON HIS OWN...

...PLAYED WITH IT INSTEAD OF TOYS.

HE WAS SO SERIOUS...

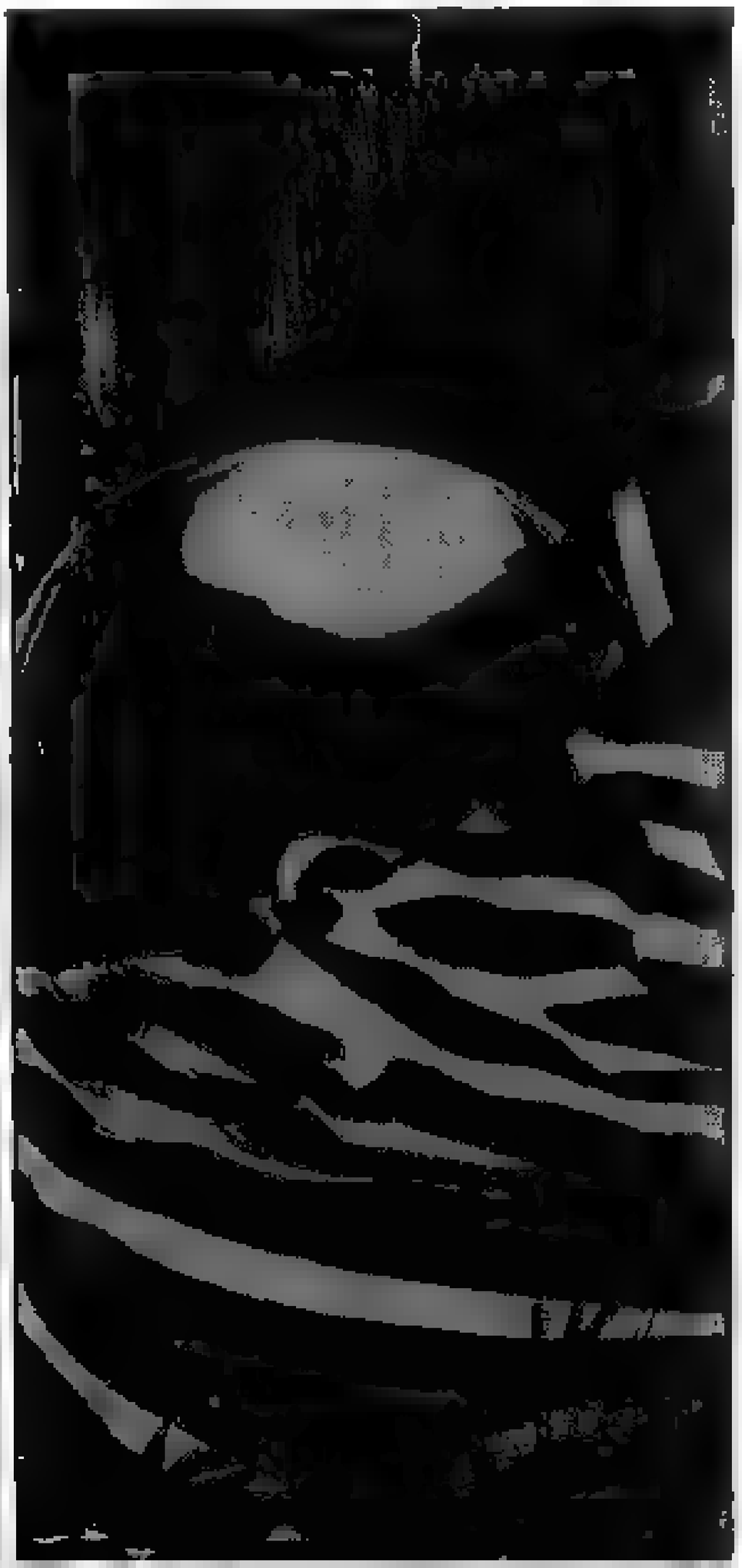
...AND DEDICATED.

...AS IF HE WERE TRYING TO REMEMBER...

...TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE'D BEEN THROUGH.

BY AGE 15 HE WAS THE STRONGEST FIGHTER IN THE TEMPLE.

HE WAS INCREDIBLY GIFTED WITH THE SPEAR.



HE COULD NOT BE BEAT...

THE NEXT STEP WAS TO PUT HIS OWN LIFE ON THE LINE IN BATTLE.

BUT INSIDE HE WAS STILL THE SAME SHINNOSUKE...

..STILL ALL BY HIMSELF...

INSHUN BECAME THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HOZOIN TEMPLE.

...STILL STRUGGLING...

SIGH...

INSHUN NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD...

I COULDN'T TEACH HIM EVERYTHING...

I HOLD NOTHING AGAINST YOU.

...I WAS PREPARED FOR THE CONSEQUENCES.

THAT'S WHY I TRAINED YOU, MUSASHI...

CLENCH

HUF

HUF

HUF

I...

I WON, RIGHT...?

THMP
THMP
THMP THMP
THMP THMP
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE STILL STANDING, MUSASHI...
YOU'VE LOST SO MUCH BLOOD...
FWOM
!!
FWUMP
.....

HEAVY...

MY BODY FEELS SO HEAVY...

WRUD

AGON...

TAKE CARE OF THEM.

ESSSSHHH

IF WE INCLUDE THE PREVIOUS MATCH...

...IT'S A TIE.

...THERE'S NO WINNER...

HUF

HUF

HUF

THIS DUEL IS NOT TO BE ENTERED INTO THE ANNALS OF HŌZŌIN TEMPLE.

ESS

Vagabond

(THESE GUYS ARE AS HEAVY AS CORPSES.)

SCRUB
SCRUB
SPLASH
WHY ME...?
WHY DO *I* HAVE TO WASH MUSASHI'S DIRTY RAGS!?

SCRUB

SO MUCH DIRT.

SCRUB

...THEY'RE FILTHY.

DAMN...

.....

.....

HMM...

GASP!

RIP!

!!

GASP!

HEY!

UH...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, KID?

?

SHUF

#75|Survivors

.....

OH, NO...

NOW THEY REALLY ARE JUST RAGS.

OH, WELL...

NNGH.

ARGH!

UNF...

WHERE AM I?

"IN A MATTER OF YEARS YOU WILL BECOME AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER."

INSHUN...

THAT VOICE I HEARD...

...WAS THAT MY IMAGINA-TION?

"I WANT TO LIVE."

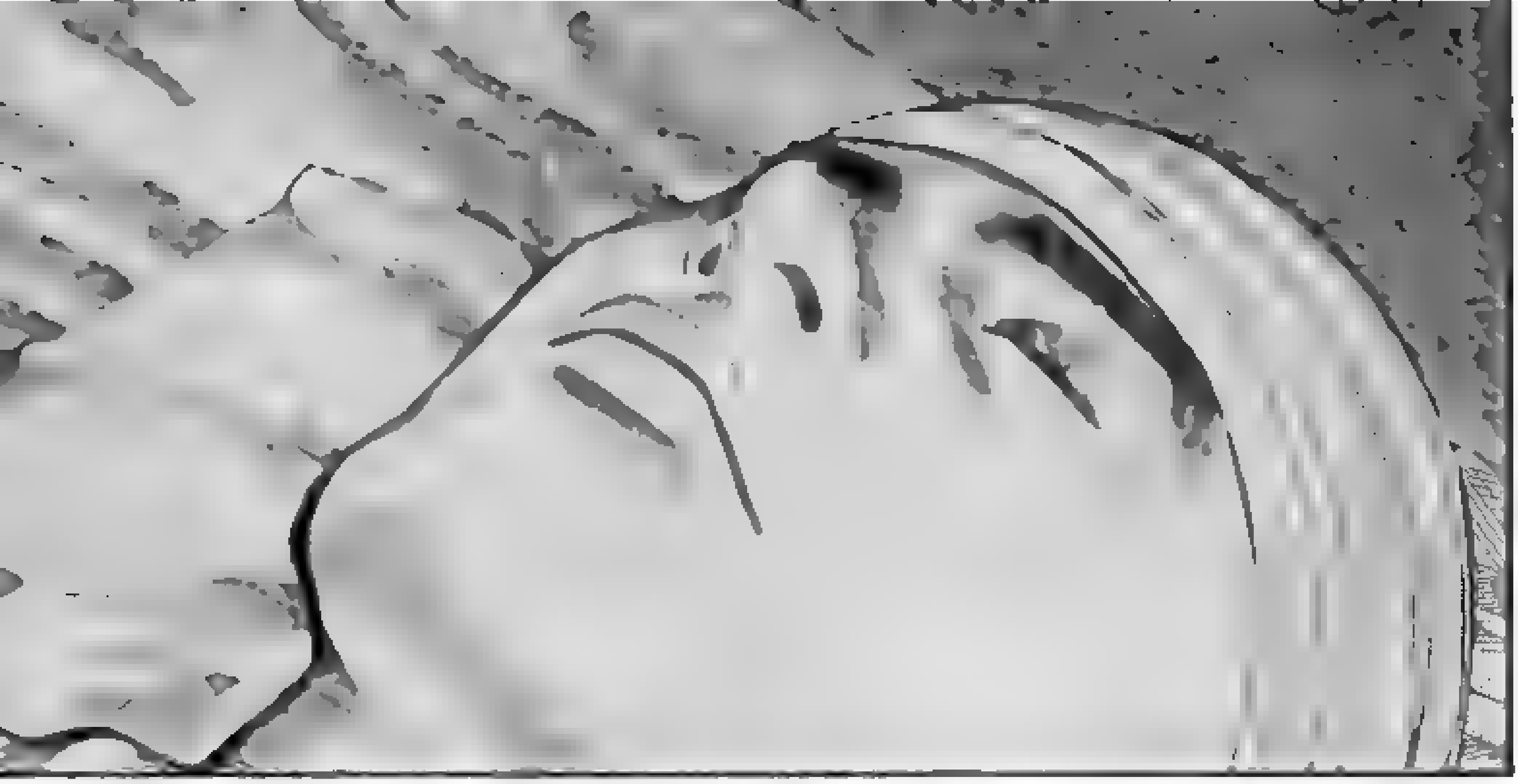
"I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THEN."

IT WAS REAL.

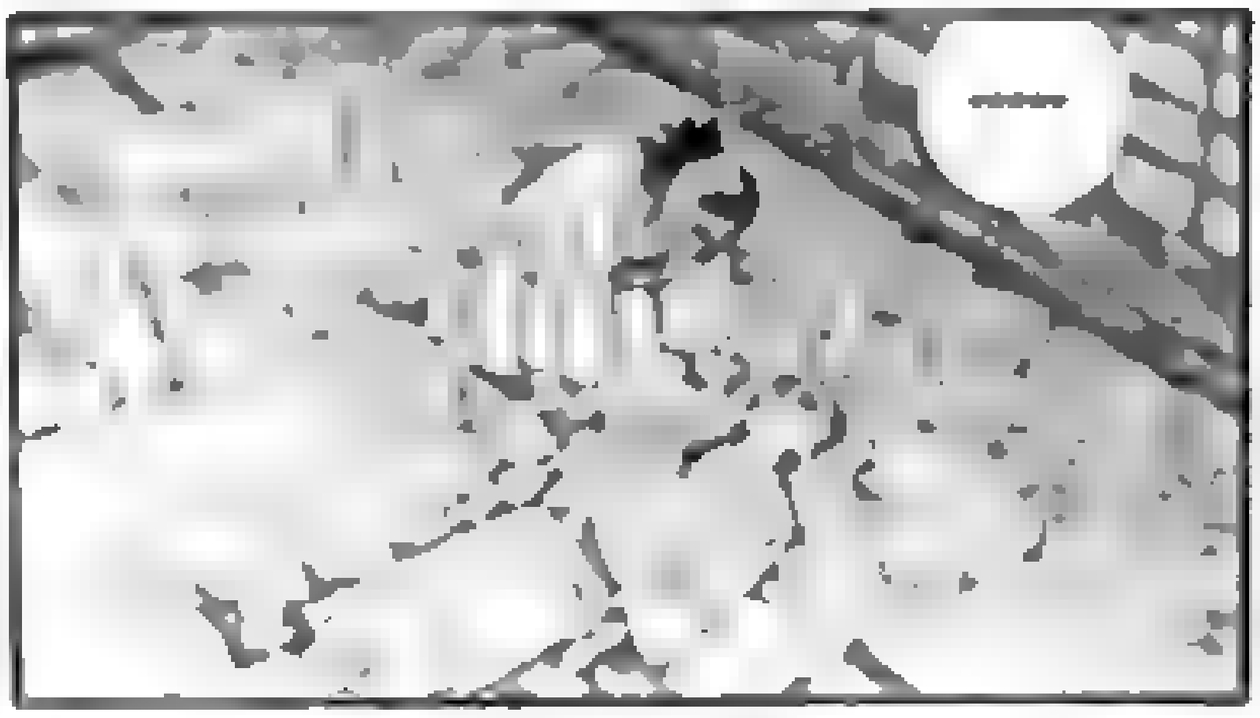
NO, IT WAS REAL.

INSHUN, THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF THE HOZOIN TOLD ME...

...I'LL BE AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHTER IN A FEW YEARS...



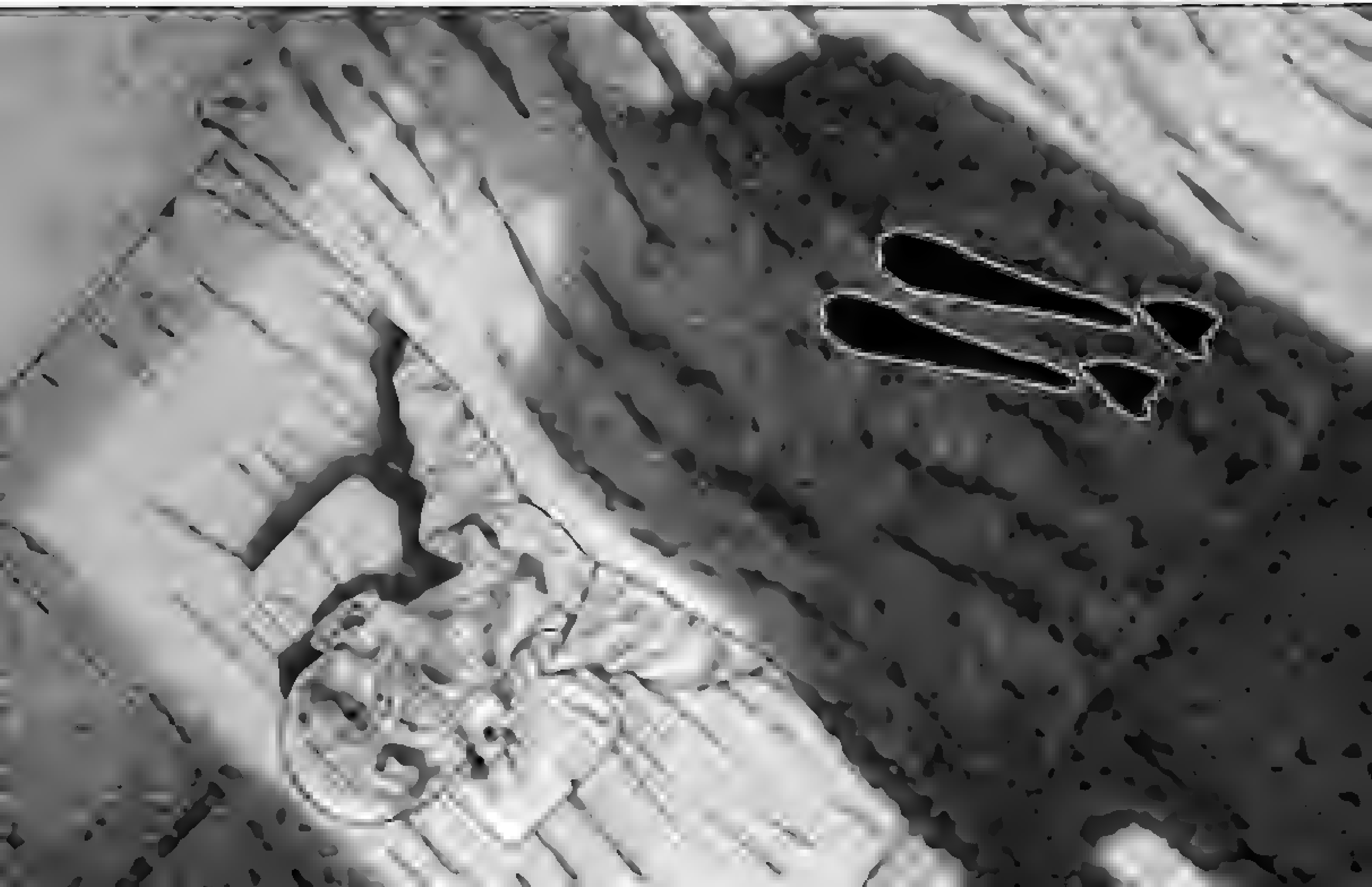
YOU
SMALL
DIE
SOON..."


HE'S
ALIVE...

I
SURVIVED.

I
DID *NOT*
DIE...

I
SURVIVED!!



OLD MAN!

PLEASE. NO...

NO... YOU CAN'T BE--

I NEVER GOT TO THANK YOU FOR TRAINING ME

I'M STRONGER NOW

...AREN'T I?

ARGH!

THERE'S A BEAST IN MY ROOM

TUNK

GASP!

!!

PLUSH

HE'S NEVER BEEN SICK UNTIL NOW...

THE RAIN AND COLD MUST HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH FOR HIM...

WEEZ

WEEZ

HEH HEH...

I'M NOT A BEAST.

HEH HEH HEH

THE MOMENT YOU STRUCK INSHUN...

YOU REVERTED BACK TO THE BEAST YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN.

SNIK

YAHH!

SNIK

YAHH!

SHUF

I AM STRONG!!

YAH!

THAT GRACELESS BLOODTHIRST.

.....

YOU WERE EXACTLY THE SAME AS WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE.

?

YES, SIR.

AGON, GET HIM THOSE THINGS.

SIR, YOU SHOULD REST...

YOUR FEVER WILL GET WORSE.

I ASSUME YOU'LL BE CONTINUING YOUR TRAVELS...

!!!

BUT NOW...

AT LEAST YOU CAN *LOOK* A BIT MORE CIVILIZED.

YOU DID VERY WELL UNTIL THAT FIRST BLOW...

...MUSASHI...

!!!

NOW THEN. I NEED TO REST...

HUF

HMM_

HUF

HUF

HUF

...HASN'T INSHUN GAINED CONSCIOUSNESS YET...?

INSHUN...

#76

Don't Put Your Life on the Line

YOU SHOULD BE RESTING!!

MASTER IN'EI!!

NONSENSE...

KRICH

KRICH

BUT, SIR..

AGON...

TP

TP

TP

ALL I NEEDED WAS A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN.

TP

TP

YOU TALK TOO MUCH..

HE'LL LAST ANOTHER 20 YEARS ...

HMM...

.....

KRNCH

KRNCH

WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE. GIVE ME A HAND.

YOU'RE FEELING BETTER?

YOU LOOK WELL.

KRCH

KRCH

KRCH

.....

...INSHUN...

I'M GLAD YOU SURVIVED...

YES...

...IT'S GOOD THAT YOU SURVIVED...

...!!

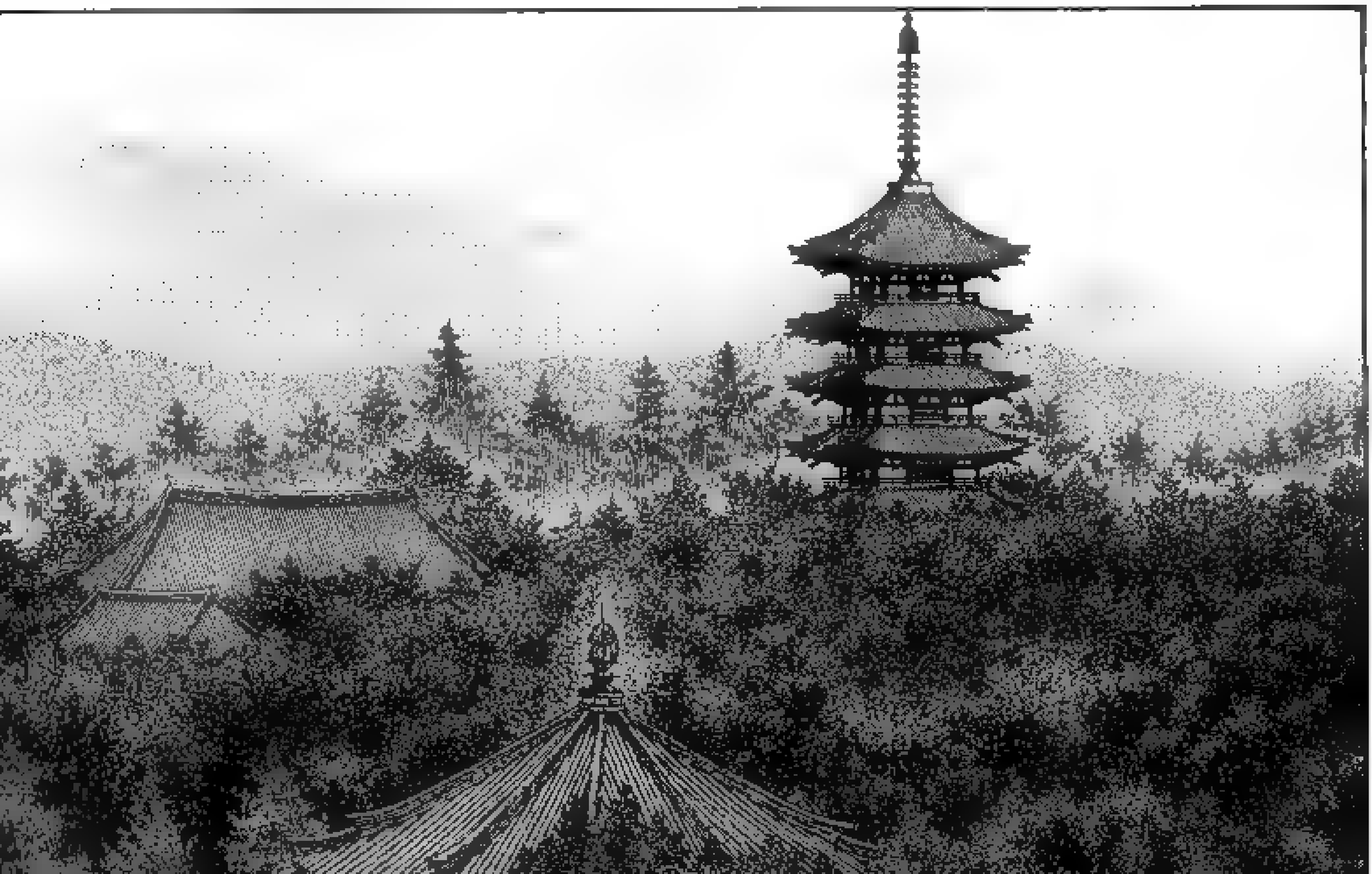
...SHINNOSUKE.

INSHUN...

SHUF

SHUF

YOU
ARE NOT
ALONE.



THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE...

...OLD MAN!

SO DON'T GO ON ABOUT SOMETHING YOU CAN'T DO...

HMPH!

...AND IT STILL PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TIME...

HRMPH! I'VE GOT AN ITCH...

SKRCH

SKRCH

HUH?

I PROMISE TO REPAY YOU FOR ALL--

DAMN YOU, OLD MAN...

...SO MANY OTHERS...

...YOUR PARENTS ...

...THE GODS...

YOU COULD SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TRYING TO RETURN ALL THE FAVORS YOU OWE PEOPLE...

SHAKE

SHAKE

WHAT'S THIS?

HOZOIN PICKLES.

HERE! TAKE THIS.

SHRK

MY SPECIALTY.

SHRK

!!!!

FWOOSH

FWOOSH

KRICH

SHUF

SHUF

SHUF

KRICH

KRICH

SHUF

MUSASHI.

LET'S MEET AGAIN.

NEXT TIME...

...LET'S TRY *NOT* TO KILL EACH OTHER.

HMPH!

I NO LONGER NEED THIS.

SIR...

SO MANY THINGS IN THIS WORLD...

NO SWORD...

...CANNOT BE EXPRESSED WITH WORDS.

THEY MUST BE EXPERIENCED...

SOME THINGS CAN *NOT* BE EXPLAINED.

SPLENDID...

I AM INSHUN...

...THE SECOND GENERATION MASTER OF HŌZŌIN!

...HOW FAR IS IT TO THE YAGYŪ?

...

NOW THEN...

SHUF

LEAD THE WAY, KID!

!!!

SHUF

SHUF

SENSEI!

SENSEI!

HMM?

#77
They Call Me Sensei

SO WHAT!?

THIS MAN REFUSES TO PAY FOR HIS LODGING!

HM?

THAT JUST WON'T DO...

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!? YOU BASTARD!!

KOJIRŌ...

HM?

SASAKI KOJIRŌ.

THIS MAN'S GOT QUITE A REPUTATION!!

!!

I...

...I'M SO SORRY...!!

S-SASAKI... KOJIRŌ...!?

JUST HEARING THE NAME SASAKI KOJIRO IS ENOUGH TO MAKE MOST PEOPLE TREMBLE WITH FEAR...

YOU MUST HAVE CUT DOWN QUITE A FEW MEN...I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.

EVERYONE FANCIES HIMSELF A SAMURAI IN TRAINING...

OF COURSE NOT!

I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK WE'RE ALL THE SAME.

HA HA...

FAME HAS ITS PROBLEMS. TOO.

YES.

IT'S GETTING DIFFICULT FOR ME TO FIND A WILLING OPPONENT.

HA HA!

I SEE.

NO...

ACTUALLY —

HMM...

ZHING

MY SWORD HUNGERS FOR FRESH BLOOD...

YES...

I SUPPOSE THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF SAMURAI.

...WHEN YOU'RE WITH US, YOU TREAT US AS EQUALS.

BUT...

.....

KIKU...

IF ONLY THEY WERE ALL LIKE YOU, KOJIRO...

UNH...

OH, KOJIRO...

AH...

UNH

KIKU SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN FOR ME.

AH...

BUT...

UNH

I'M GOING OUT FOR A DRINK.

OKO TRAINED ME PERHAPS TOO WELL IN MATTERS OF THE FLESH. ALL OTHER WOMEN PALE IN COMPARISON TO HER.

.....

AH.

S-SASAKI SENSEI!

UILP!

GASP!

...SIR...

SHUF

SHUF

GOOD EVENING ...

SHAFT

SHAFT

HM?

HERE'S THE GUY!!

FOOL! BE POLITE!

YOU AGAIN?

.....

HMPH!

...SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

PARDON THE INTRUSION...

ESH

ASCENDING DRAGONS?

I HAVE DEDICATED THE PAST 35 YEARS TO THE WAY OF THE SWORD.

I AM KAI SHOJIRO...

WE SHALL SEE WHETHER I'M THE EQUAL OF THESE ASCENDING DRAGONS--THIS RECENT WAVE OF TALENTED YOUNG FIGHTERS.

I REQUEST A MATCH!!

YOU ARE INDEED YOUNG!

...BUT NOT AS BIG AS THEY SAY...

GULP...

I DON'T WANT TO CAUSE A DISTURBANCE.

LET'S GO ELSEWHERE.

YES.

I HEAR THAT YOU CALL YOUR STYLE, "GANRYU."

IT'S QUITE AN ACHIEVEMENT TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE.

"GANRYU ...?"

WHAT'S THAT...?

IN ANY CASE...

THIS GUY...

HE SEEMS DIFFERENT FROM ALL THOSE OTHER PUNKS...

OH, IT'S JUST MY SANDAL...

HM?

HE'S NOTHING LIKE AKAKABE YASOMA

SOME-THING WRONG?

THMP THMP

THMP THMP

TRUMP

ARGH!!

WHA -!?

ARGH !

NNGH !

!!

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

...

A GENUINE TIGER!!

MMBL

IT COMES FROM A FAR OFF LAND!

A GREAT TIGER FROM KOREA!!

MMBL

MMBL

THE GREAT LORD KATO KIYOMOSA CAPTURED THIS TIGER HIMSELF!

HUH

HUH

MMBL

I WANT MY MONEY BACK!

WHAT'S THE POINT IN LOOKING AT A DEAD TIGER!?

HEY, I WANT MY MONEY BACK!

STOP IT, GRANNY! YOU'RE MAKING A SPECTACLE OF YOURSELF!!

BUT IT'S DEAD.

THIS IS A TIGER HIDE.

YOU TRICKED ME!!

WHAM

HUH!?

PARDON.

OH, NO... PARDON *ME!*

FICH

MATAHACHI!!!

#78

Ascending Dragon

STOP!

WAIT, SON!!

!!

MATA-HACHI!!

YOU FOOL!!

WHY ARE YOU RUNNING AWAY!?

THIEF!

STOP, THIEF!!

HUF

HUF

.....

CATCH THAT THIEF!

WE GOT HIM!

YOU'RE A THIEF, HUH!?

!!

WHAM

SHOVE

YAHHHH!

SHOVE

I SAID, STOP IT!

YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.

YOU BASTARD !!

DAMN YOU!

HEY! STOP IT!!

HMPH!

YOU CRUEL BASTARDS!

I YELLED OUT, BUT I DIDN'T ASK YOU TO STOMP ON HIM!

YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO THAT, YOU LOWLY MERCHANTS!!

NOW, GO AWAY!!

NO, HE'S NOT! HOW DARE YOU!?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S A THIEF!

YOU LOWLY MERCHANTS HAVE NO RIGHT TO KICK AROUND THE SON OF A SAMURAI.

YES, I DID.

HMPH!

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID HE WAS A THIEF!

FORGET ABOUT IT. SHE'S OUT OF HER MIND.

WHAT!? YOU OLD--!!

HMPH!

THAT'S ENOUGH. MATAHACHI'S NOT A KID ANYMORE.

GRANNY !

FWAK

YOU THINK YOU DROPPED OUT OF THE SKY!?

FWAK

SHUT UP, GON!!

HOW DARE YOU RUN AWAY FROM YOUR OWN MOTHER!?

FWAK

FWAK

YOU'RE MY SON!!

FWAK

FWAK

BUT YOU'RE LIVING OUT HERE IN OSAKA...

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE YOU WERE TRICKED BY THAT BASTARD MUSASHI TO GO OUT AND FIGHT...I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.

WHY DIDN'T YOU COME HOME!?

WHY ARE YOU HIDING FROM YOUR RELATIVES?

LOOK... MOTHER...

I WAS TOO ASHAMED...

WHAT DID YOU DO AFTER SEKIGAHARA ...

...THAT WAS SO SHAMEFUL ?

...TO RETURN

WHY DIDN'T YOU COME AND SEE...

...YOUR VERY OWN MOTHER?

TELL ME...

YOU'VE RUINED OUR FAMILY'S REPUTATION ...

THAT'S IT.

A LIFE OF WOMEN AND ALCOHOL...

HMM...

.....

I'M TRULY SORRY...

AND THEN YOU END UP BEING A FUGITIVE FROM KYOTO...

HAVE YOU BEEN GIVEN AN OFFICIAL POSITION?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?

YES...

...BUT WHAT'S WITH THAT HAIR?

YOU'RE WEARING SUCH NICE CLOTHES...

BY THE SWORD ?

I LIVE BY THE SWORD.

I HAVEN'T.

I MEAN, NO!

THE WAY OF THE SWORD...

...IT TOOK ME A WHILE...

...BUT I'VE FINALLY DISCOVERED THE TRUTH...

HMM...

I GIVE LESSONS...

...IN SWORD FIGHTING AND SUCH.

ALL I HAVE IS THE WAY OF THE SWORD!!

HOW ADMIRABLE!! EH, GON!?

YES. HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A FUGITIVE.

BUT THE BLOOD OF THE HON'IDEN FAMILY RUNS THROUGH HIM, ALL RIGHT.

REALLY !?

HA HA!!

WELL!!

A SWORDS-MAN!!

LOOK AT THIS!

金襄電表中一条流太刀之一

印可

文之上

伝授受之事

IT'S A...

...A SWORDS-MAN'S CERTIFI-CATE...!!

!!

I...

I
ALWAYS
THOUGHT YOU
WERE A BETTER
MAN THAN THAT
TAKEZŌ...

BRRR

BRRR

BRRR

BRRR

AND
I WAS
RIGHT.

BRRR

BRRR

I KNOW
YOU WERE
WORRIED
SICK OVER
ME.

BUT
YOU CAN
REST EASY
NOW,
MOTHER.

LET ME
HAVE A
CLOSER
LOOK.

GRAB

WAIT!

HM?

PSEUDONYM?

WHY USE A PSEUDONYM?

YOU HAVE A RESPECTABLE NAME, MATAHACHI HONʼIDEN!!

THIS?

IT'S UH...

...MY PSEUDONYM.

HUH?

WHY DOES IT SAY SASAKI KOJIRŌ!?

ANSWER ME, BOY!

BECAUSE OF MY SHAMEFUL PAST...

...I DIDN'T WANT TO TARNISH OUR ANCESTORS' REPUTATION...

SAY...

I'M GETTING HUNGRY.

LET'S GO HAVE SOME LUNCH!

I SEE...

.....

THE LONG AWAITED REUNION!

CHEERS!

RIGHT, GRANNY?

.....

ALL THIS TRAVELING PAID OFF! WHO WOULD HAVE EXPECTED IT?

WE'RE HERE WITH MATAHACHI.

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WE'RE OUT FOR REVENGE!?

WE'RE LOOKING FOR TAKEZO AND OTSU!!

HMM...

WE'RE OUT OF SAKÉ.

ENOUGH, GON!!

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHY WE'RE HERE?

MORE SAKÉ!!

!!

YOU'RE OBLIVIOUS ABOUT THE VILLAGE, MATAHACHI.

DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OTSŪ?

SORRY...

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT...?

...TAKEZO AND OTSŪ?

OTSŪ!!

WHAT'S BECOME OF HER!?

IF SHE'S STILL WAITING FOR ME, I'LL RETURN TO MIYAMOTO VILLAGE IMMEDIATELY!!

IF SHE'S...

...WITH TAKEZŌ.

SHE LEFT THE VILLAGE...

!

OTSU!...

...WITH TAKEZŌ!?!

ACTUALLY, HE'S CALLING HIMSELF MIYAMOTO MUSASHI NOW.

HMPH!

IT'S OBVIOUS.

SHE GAVE UP ON YOU SINCE YOU DIDN'T COME HOME. NOW SHE'S WITH TAKEZO.

WAIT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

BUT OTSU HELPED HIM ESCAPE.

TAKUAN HAD HIM HANGING FROM THE OLD CEDAR TREE AT SHIPPOJI TEMPLE. HE SHOULD HAVE DIED...

.....

SHE DISAPPEARED FROM THE VILLAGE THAT VERY SAME DAY.

SHE SPIT ON THE HON'IDEN FAMILY DESPITE ALL WE'VE DONE FOR HER!

WE CAN'T GO HOME UNTIL WE MAKE THOSE TWO PAY!

THAT'S WHY WE ARE TRAVELING THE COUNTRY.

YOU SEE, MATA-HACHI...

DON'T BE STUPID.

THEY'RE NOT LITTLE KIDS.

THEN... TH-THOSE TWO...

THEY'RE...

...INVOLVED?

YOU SHOULD SEE THEM FOR WHAT THEY ARE.

WE ARE FROM THE SAME VILLAGE...

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...

WE HEAR ABOUT HIM WHEREVER WE TRAVEL.

EXCUSE ME...

WE HEARD YOU MENTION MIYAMOTO MUSASHI. DO YOU KNOW HIM, BY CHANCE?

AND MOST RECENTLY, HE DEFEATED INSHUN OF HŌZŌIN TEMPLE...!!

HE FOUGHT YOSHIOKA DENSHICHIRŌ TO A DEADLOCK...

OF COURSE, THESE ARE JUST RUMORS.

INSHUN IS STILL HEAD OF HŌZŌIN, SO WE DON'T KNOW HOW TRUE THIS STORY IS.

BUT HE MUST'VE AT LEAST HELD HIS GROUND AGAINST INSHUN.

...!!

HMPH !!

WHAT !?

I THOUGHT YOU WERE FROM THE SAME VILLAGE.

AREN'T YOU HAPPY FOR HIM?

AMONGST THOSE OF US DEDICATED TO THE SWORD...

...HE IS THE GREATEST ASCENDING DRAGON!

THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT MIYAMOTO MUSASHI!

HEY...

ASCENDING DRAGON...

ASCENDING DRAGON, HUH?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF SASAKI KOJIRŌ?

GASP!

THEY SAY HE FIGHTS LIKE A DEMON.

YES, OF COURSE!!

SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

SOME DAY...

...KOJIRŌ WILL DEFEAT MUSASHI...

About the Author

VAGABOND was created by Takehiko Inoue, author of the best selling manga *SLAM DUNK*, with over 100 million copies in print worldwide. For his work on *VAGABOND*, Inoue received the 2000 Media Arts award for Manga from the Japanese Ministry of Culture as well as the 2000 Kodansha Award for best manga. Most recently in 2002, Inoue's *VAGABOND* received the prestigious Tezuka award for best manga. To date, *VAGABOND* has sold well over 22 million copies throughout the world. In addition to his numerous manga titles, Inoue also created the character designs for the PlayStation basketball game, *ONE ON ONE*.

About *VAGABOND* and *Miyamoto Musashi*

Takehiko Inoue's *VAGABOND*, based on Eiji Yoshikawa's novel *MUSASHI*, is a fictional account of the life of Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645). The historical figure Miyamoto Musashi, author of the philosophical strategy guide *A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS*, was a master of the sword and was revered as a "sword-saint." He founded the Niten Ichi style of sword fighting which is typified by fighting with both long and short swords at once, holding the long sword with the right hand and the short sword with the left. Musashi was also a master of the "gentler arts"—he was a master of *sumi-e* (black ink drawings), metalworking, and woodcarving. The films, *THE SAMURAI TRILOGY*, directed by Hiroshi Inagaki and starring Toshiro Mifune were also based on Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*. Inspired by the huge success of *VAGABOND* in Japan, in 2003, NHK produced the historical period drama, *MUSASHI*. Also based on Yoshikawa's novel, this drama stars kabuki actor Shinnosuke Ichikawa as Musashi and TV star Ryoko Yonekura as Otsu.

A note on names:

The names presented within the context of this comic are presented in the traditional Japanese order—surname, followed by first name. "Miyamoto" is Miyamoto Musashi's last name and "Musashi" is his first name. The name of the creator of *VAGABOND*, however, has been presented first name first, last name second. "Takehiko" is the author's first name and "Inoue" is his last name.

Glossary and Extraneous Background Information

Hozoin Spear Technique
Created by the Buddhist monk Kakuzenbo Hoin In'ei (1521-1607) of Hozoin Temple which was a sub-temple of Kofukuji Temple in Nara. This spear technique is typified by quick dexterous movements rather than the use of brute force.

Sasaki Kojiro
The legendary archrival of Miyamoto Musashi. Kojiro is believed to have studied the Chujo-ryu style of swordsmanship under the instruction of either Toda Seigen or Kanemaki Jisai. Kojiro was renowned for his *Tsubame-gaeshi*, or "swallow cut" technique, inspired by the movement of a swallow in flight.

The Sengoku Period and the Battle of Sekigahara
The Warring States or *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) in Japan was a time of chaos and conflict. Central authorities, in the form of the imperial court and the shogunate, had grown increasingly weaker and the land was effectively ruled autonomously by numerous *daimyo* (domainal lords). Looking to expand their spheres of control, the *daimyo* were constantly at war with each other. One *daimyo* in particular, Oda Nobunaga, set out on a mission to unify Japan by means of conquest. Incredibly successful, by the time of his assassination in 1582, he managed to control approximately one-third of all of Japan. One of Nobunaga's chief generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, became Nobunaga's successor to carry on the quest for unification. Through a process of conquest and conciliation, Hideyoshi succeeded in creating an orderly federation amongst the *daimyo*, and by 1590, order was restored to Japan under Hideyoshi's rule. Hideyoshi's death in 1598, however, presented the question of succession. Most of the *daimyo* from the domains in the west remained loyal to the Toyotomi Clan and its five-year-old heir, Toyotomi Hideyori. Tokugawa Ieyasu, however, leading the major *daimyo* from central and eastern Japan, challenged the Toyotomi clan's leadership. The two sides clashed at the Battle of Sekigahara (1600) in Mino (located in present day Gifu Prefecture) where the Tokugawa claimed an overwhelming victory. From that point on, the Tokugawa clan would effectively rule Japan for the next 250 years.

Takuan Soho (1573-1645)
A monk of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, by the time Takuan was 37, he was appointed abbot of the leading temple of the Rinzai sect, Daitokuji. Takuan was an important figure whose acute and brutally honest advice was sought by influential and powerful figures such as Emperor Go Mizuno and the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu. His correspondence to Yagyu Munenori discussing Zen and swordsmanship entitled *THE UNFETTERED MIND* has become an influential treatise in both the areas of philosophy and martial arts. The pickled daikon radish, *takuan*, also bears his name.

The Yagyu Clan
Yagyu Muneyoshi Sekishusai (1527-1606) was the founder of the famed Yagyu-Shinkage school of sword fighting. His son Yagyu Munenori (1571-1646) was one of Tokugawa's key general's at the Battle of Sekigahara. Munenori was appointed as the official fencing instructor of the Tokugawa Clan and in 1632 the Yagyu were appointed as the *ometsuke*—responsible for the surveillance of the *daimyo*. Although the Yagyu clan has been depicted in Kazuo Koike's *LONE WOLF AND CUB* as the plotters of the downfall of Itto Ogami, the general Japanese popular culture take on the Yagyu Clan is more positive. More specifically, Munenori's son, Yagyu Jubei (1607-1650), is viewed as a wandering hero protecting the people from evil-doers.

Yoshioka Kempo (dates unknown)
A distinguished warrior during the *Sengoku* period (1482-1558) and the founder of the renowned Yoshioka school of sword fighting. Yoshioka Kempo mastered the Kyohachi style of swordmanship and then modified it to form the Yoshioka style. In the context of Inoue's *VAGABOND* as well as in Yoshikawa's *MUSASHI*, Yoshioka Seijuro and Denshichiro are Kempo's sons who are historically thought to have dueled with Miyamoto Musashi on numerous occasions.

editor's choice

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